

# THE REHEARSAL.

1. Mr. Hoadly Contradicts himself. And denies *Liberty of Conscience* to the *Dissenters*.
2. Whence his *Unconstancy* proceeds.
3. He Pleads for *Liberty of Conscience* to the *Dissenters*.
4. He Charges our *Errors* upon *God*, to Excuse the *Dissenters*.
5. The Pretence of *Conscience* often a *Blind*. And what the *Duty* of the *Magistrate* is in such Cases.
6. He acts at his *Peril*, as do's the *Separatist*.
7. How we are to Behave, in Case we *Doubt*.
8. The *Objections* of the *Separatists* at Best but a *Doubt*.
9. Of *Indifferent* things.
10. The *Conscience* of the *Magistrate* to be Consider'd as well as of the *Separatist*.

WEDNESDAY, September 24. 1707.

(1.) Country-man.

**M**ethinks, Master, That Mr. Hoadly do's Contradict himself, and has Thrown down the whole *Pail* that he had *Milk'd* so full. For the *Drift* of his *Sermon* was, as you have shew'd me, in Praise of that *Moderation* which Allows *Liberty of Conscience* to the *Dissenters*. In which he makes but one *Exception*, that of *Danger* to the *State*. And by what you Quoted out of him last time, he do's totally Exclude the *Dissenters* from all Pretence to *Liberty of Conscience*, representing their *Separation* so Exceedingly *Dangerous* to the *State*, as he has very *Lively* done.

(2.) *Rehearsal*. When Men Argue not from any *Fixt Principle*, to which they Adhere in good Earnest, but to serve a *Party* or a *Turn*, they *Veer* about and *Change* like a *Weather-Cock* with every *Wind*. Besides there is something in Every *Error* which is *Inconsistent* with it self, therefore it Cannot go upon all four, but *Trips* whenever it is *Prefs'd*.

(3.) These sad Effects (says Mr. Hoadly of *Separation*) that Considering the *Wickedness*, and *Corruption* and *Interests* of the *World*, will be the *Necessary Consequences* of these *Unnecessary Divisions*—Then he Exhorts the *Dissenters* to Consider of this. But at last puts the Case to the *Utmost*, That they Cannot Satisfy their *Conscience*, then he Rules the Case thus, at the end of p. 9. and beginning of p. 10. and says of such a Man,

" 'Tis as much his *Duty* to *Separate*, as it is to be an *Honest* and sincere *Man*, as it is not to act against his *Conscience*. And 'twill be hard to prove that he *Sins* in it, except he can prove that *God* has laid a *Man* Under a *Necessity* of *Sinning* on one side or the other, after he has done all that he can to *Avoid* it.

Thus Mr. Hoadly, Now let me see, Country-man, what you have to say to this.

(4.) Country-m. You have Instructed me before *Num. 171. 172.* Concerning the Case of an *Erring Conscience*. And I may say, That it is most Commonly the *Fault* of a *Man* himself. When *Pride*, and *Interest*, and *Resentment*, and several other *Passions*, do *Blind* his *Judgment*. If a *Man* wou'd *Hear* patiently, and *Judge* Impartially, there wou'd be little *Difference* of *Moment* among *Us*. But what is our own *Fault*, Mr. Hoadly makes *God's* *Fault*. He has a *Strange Faculty* of *Charging* every thing upon *God*. As you Quoted him before, That either *God* did not *Design* to give *Us* a *Clear Revelation*, or else that He cou'd not so *Express Himself* as to *Accomplish* what He design'd. So here, That *God* has laid *man* Under a *Necessity* of *Sinning*. But what *man* can *Clear* himself from having *Neglected* something that was in his *Power* towards his *Information*? And to be *Perfectly Free* from all those *Passions* and *Interest* which *Bias* his *Judgment*?

(5.) But then again, There are many who Pretend *Conscience*, where there is some

some other *Design* at the Bottom, And we Cannot Distinguish these. And great *Mischiefs* have been done by these *Pretenders* to *Conscience*.

Now Mr. *Hoadly* says in this same p. 9. (Quoted in your *Last*) That it is not enough for a Man to Plead *Conscience* for his Separation, but that it must be on good *Grounds* too. Else that it is a great *Sin*. I wou'd ask him then, who is *Judge* of the *Grounds* that are Pretended, whether they are *Good* or not? If he says the Man is *Judge* as to Himself. I wou'd ask him again, Whether the *Magistrate* is not likewise *Judge* as to Himself? And if the *Magistrate* thinks the *Grounds* are not *Good*, and not Equivalent to the Great *Mischiefs* of Separation, not only to the *Souls* of Men, but of most Dangerous Consequences to the *State*, whether he may not think that he who beareth not the *Sword* of *God* in *Vain*, is oblig'd to Controul this *Plea* of *Conscience*, for Example to others, and the Preservation of the *Publick Peace*? For we cannot Deny *Liberty* of *Conscience* to *Kings* and *States*, while we Assert it as the *Right* of every Man. And who wou'd Desire that the *King* or *Government* under which he liv'd shou'd have no *Conscience*? But if they have *Conscience*, then whether shou'd their *Conscience* or that of a *Separatist* take Place? For if they Interfere, one must give Place to the other. Let Mr. *Hoadly* untie this *Knot*, and he shall know more of my *Mind*.

(6.) *Rehears*. He will say, That the Man *Sins* who *Seperats*, and not upon good *Grounds*: And the *Magistrate* if he mistakes those *Grounds*, and seeks to Restrain them, if they are *Good*.

*Country-m*. Then each do's it at his *Peril*, for *God* is *Judge*. But there is this Difference, that *God* has made the *Magistrate* Judge over the *Separatist* in this World, but not the *Separatist* over the *Magistrate*.

(7.) *Rehears*. But what if you *Doubt* whether the *Grounds* of the *Separatist* are *Good* or not? What is your *Duty* to do in this Case?

*Country-m*. Not to *Seperate* with him. Because a *Doubtfull* *Duty* must not take Place against a *Certain* *Duty*. And it is a *Certain* *Duty* to obey the *Magistrate* in all *Lawfull* things. Therefore if I only *Doubt* whether the thing be *Lawfull*, the *Authority* of the *Magistrate* must over-Rule; because *God* has *Certainly* commanded me to be *Subject* to the *Higher Powers*.

(8.) But I'll tell you, *Master*, I think it impossible for any to believe that those *Objections*, which our *Seperatists* make against their *Conforming* to the *Church*, do Amount to any more than a *Doubt* at the Best. Tho' they are no *Doubt* to me, for

I think them all *Trifling* and *Insignificant*. But there may be *Weak Minds* which may *Doubt* about them. And to these I have given a *Certain Rule*.

*Rehears*. But Mr. *Hoadly* says, p. 9. That if a Man cannot bring his *Conscience*, after his best Care, to believe those things *Lawfull* or *Necessary* which are *Requir'd* of him; 'Tis as much his *Duty* to *Seperate* as to be an *Honest Man*, &c. as before Quoted.

(9.) *Country-m*. Here Mr. *Hoadly* puts two words together very improperly, that is, *Lawfull* and *Necessary*. For all *Indifferent* things are *Lawfull*, but they are not *Necessary*. If they were *Necessary*, they wou'd not be *Indifferent*. And all our Dispute with the *Dissenters* is, as themselves Plead, about *Indifferent* things. Which they make to be *Unlawfull* merely because they are *Commanded*. Which is the very Spirit of *Perverseness*. For the Power of the *Magistrate* Extends only to *Indifferent* things. He cannot make *Good*, *Evil*; nor *Evil*, *Good*. And if he Cannot Command in *Indifferent* things, then no *Governor*, no *Father*, no *Master* has any *Authority* at all. And herein I think there is no *Doubt*. And that the *Scruples* of any herein can Amount to no more than a *Doubt* at the Best, as I have said.

(10.) And if the *Magistrate* thinks himself oblig'd in *Conscience* to Restrain such *Groundless Scruples*, for the Preservation of the *Publick Peace*, and if he *Sins* herein, then, according to Mr. *Hoadly*, he *Sins* both ways. This is the *Knot* I wou'd have him *Unie*. And let him Consider the *Conscience* of the *Magistrate*, as well as the *Conscience* of the *Separatist*. For sure he is not *Partial*!

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